

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action dated December 12, 2003, claims 7 and 10 are amended, and claims 1-5 are canceled. Claims 7, 8 and 10 are now active in this application. No new matter has been added.

REJECTION OF CLAIMS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-5, 7, 8 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mandel et al. (USPN 5,823,529, hereinafter Mandel '529) in view of Mandel et al. (USPN 5,358,238, hereinafter Mandel '238).

With regard to claim 7, the Examiner contends that Mandel '529 discloses a notification means (controller 100 of FIG. 5) for notifying a user of a specific one of the paper ejection trays in which a last ejected sheet is present, referring to column 29, lines 22-34. The Examiner maintains that "the user send the print job to the "almost-full" bin of the printer, the print job is separated into two parts, the first part is delivered to the "almost-full" bin until the bin is full, then the rest of the print job is delivered onto newly assigned bin 11." In this regard, the Examiner contends "that the rest of that print job would be at least one of the last sheets. The user is informed of that automatically through a message 'col. 29, lines 33-34'. Therefore, the user would be notified his print job locates on two different bins including the last assigned bin storing the last part of the print job. The printer inherently comprises a component corresponding to notification means for generating a message to the user of the status of his print job stored in the specified trans, or the notification means would be a controller '100 in the mailbox system in fig. 5' because there only is a controller in this mailbox system for generating a display instruction signal to the terminal 15 of the

assigned user 'col. 29, lines 4-9'. Thus, the controller 100 would also notify the status of the assigned user's print job at the printer trays".

However, while the arrangement of Mandel '529 will assign another bin or the overflow tray 11a, or another only partially filled bin if there is not enough room in the bin into which the sheets are to be dispensed and will automatically inform the user of this through a message, the controller 100 cannot reasonably be interpreted as controlling a notification unit that is disposed on the paper ejection trays or in the vicinity of the paper ejection trays to communicate an indication notifying the user that the last ejected sheet is present in the corresponding paper ejection tray, as occurs in the present invention.

To expedite prosecution, claim 7 is amended to delineate, *inter alia*:

a plurality of notifying units respectively disposed on the paper ejection trays or in the vicinity of the paper ejection trays; and

a controller, connected with the notifying units, for controlling the notifying units including controlling a respective notification unit to communicate an indication notifying the user that the last ejected sheet is present in the corresponding paper ejection tray.

As neither Mandel '529 nor Mandel '238 discloses or suggests such arrangement, amended claim 7 is patentable over these references. Consequently, the allowance of amended independent claim 7, and claim 8 depending from claim 7, is respectfully solicited.

To additionally expedite prosecution, claim 10 is amended to delineate:

An image forming system capable of being connected to a plurality of external apparatuses and performing image formations based on data sent from the external apparatuses, said image forming system comprising:

a plurality of image forming apparatus, each having a plurality of paper ejection trays for receiving sheets on which images are formed;

a control unit for, when a respective image forming apparatus receives an ejection instruction from one of the external apparatuses and the number of sheets required to execute said ejection instruction exceeds a capacity of an available one of said paper ejection trays of said respective image forming unit, ejecting a part of sheets to said available

one of said paper ejection] trays of said respective image forming unit and continuously ejecting the remaining sheets to another available one of said paper ejection trays of said respective image forming unit, and when said respective image forming apparatus receives said ejection instruction from one of the external apparatuses and the number of sheets required to execute said ejection instruction exceeds the capacity of all available paper ejection trays of said respective image forming unit, ejecting a part of sheets to the available paper ejection trays of said respective image forming unit and continuously ejecting the remaining sheets to available paper ejection trays of another one of the plurality of image forming units; and

notifying means for notifying a user of the paper ejection trays in the respective image forming units where the part of sheets and the remaining sheets are present, wherein said notifying means includes a plurality of display units respectively provided in correspondence with each paper ejection tray.

Thus, amended claim 10 includes features of the second embodiment where, when there are a plurality of network-connected printers and a plurality of PCs connected to the plurality of printers, when a necessary number of paper ejection trays for ejecting the number of sheets specified by the PCs connected to one printer are not left in the printer, the overflowing sheets are output into the paper ejection trays of another printer. Neither Mandel '529 nor Mandel '238 discloses or suggests such arrangement. Therefore, amended independent claim 10 is patentable over these references and its allowance is respectfully solicited.

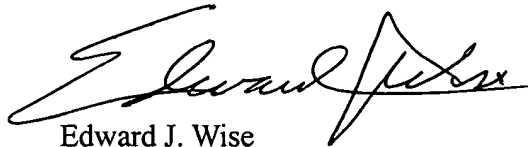
CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is urged that the application, as now amended, is in condition for allowance, an indication of which is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward J. Wise', written over a horizontal line.

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